Memoranda for April 1946

April 0 = Julian Day 2,431,911

SUN.—The inclination of the Sun's axis reaches a maximum of 26°·4 on the 7th, the N. pole being to the West, and decreases to 24°·4 by the end of the month; the tilt, away from the Earth, is decreasing, and is $5\frac{1}{2}$ degrees at the middle of the month.

MOON.—New 2nd, 4.37 A.M.; First quarter 8th, 8 P.M.; Full 16th, 11 A.M.; Last quarter 24th, 3 P.M.

MERCURY is a morning star very unfavourably placed for Northern observers.

VENUS is becoming visible in the evening twilight; sets *† 8.40 P.M.

MARS is on the meridian about 6.30 P.M.† and does not set till after 4 A.M.,† but he is becoming difficult to observe on account of increasing distance; diameter decreases during the month from 8″·0 to 6″·5.

JUPITER is at opposition on April 13 and, of course, visible all night, but, being some 7 degrees South of the Equator, will be rather low in our sky. Best observed when near the meridian. In Virgo, very near, and to the N. of, *Spica*.

SATURN, now to the W. of Mars, sets *† about 2 A.M., and can best be observed in the evening. On the meridian at 6 P.M.†

URANUS, in Taurus, can still be seen in the early part of the night, and NEPTUNE, just past opposition, is visible all night. Near γ Virginis.

METEORS.—The *Lyrid* "shower", which seems to have become weaker in recent years, is due April 20–22. Moonlight will interfere in the early hours of the night, but there will be an interval of darkness between moonset and dawn, advantage of which may be taken (see *Handbook*).

ZODIACAL LIGHT may be looked for on the first two or three evenings of the month and again after the 18th.—P. M. R.

OBITUARY

John Willoughby Meares, C.I.E., F.R.A.S.

Mr. Meares was born in 1871 and educated at Winchester, where he observed the famous shower of Andromede meteors on 1885 November 27. The interest thus awakened was furthered by reading the Whewell-Brewster controversy on the plurality of worlds at the house of a Wrangler uncle, who, having written a thesis on the Moon's motions, was unable to explain how to distinguish a planet from a star!

Beginning observational work with a $1\frac{1}{4}$-inch telescope, power 12, he had the luck to fall in with the late Mr. Arthur Mee, F.R.A.S., of Cardiff, in 1889, whose 8-inch Calver was available on every fine night. Joining the B.A.A. as a "founder member", Mr. Meares bought a $3\frac{1}{4}$-inch refractor, with which he began planetary observations—calling forth commendation from Captain Noble, our first President, in the pages of the *English Mechanic*. Presently he made an equatorial stand for this small instrument, with electrically illuminated circles, to see which Lord Kelvin climbed up a ladder on to the roof of the Hove Electric Lighting Company's power-house. In 1896 he took a 9-inch With-Calver equatorial with him to India, where the unrivalled skies of Darjeeling gave many visitors a thrill.

Up to about 1900 Mr. Meares contributed drawings and observations to the Jupiter and Mars Sections, as well as some articles to the *Journal*; but his official duties then precluded regular work. Halley's Comet was seen by him under very favourable conditions on 1910 May 19 from Calcutta; incidentally, his father saw this object both then and eighty-five years earlier.

He married twice, and leaves two sons. His elder son is a Life Member of the Association.

NOTES

A Remarkable Clock

Mr. J. Cecil Maby sends us a cutting from the *Sunday Express* of 1945 December 23 describing a clock made by the late Thomas Vickery of Bridgenorth, Shropshire. He is said to have spent twenty years in perfecting this clock. Times of sunrise and sunset are shown, and an automatically set perpetual calendar shows the number of days in the month, the day of the week and of the month, the name of the month and the equation of time. The clock is said to have lost only just over three seconds in three years. It is to be placed in the Clockmakers' Museum at the Guildhall, London.—ED.

* = in lat. 52° N., † = on 15th or mid-month.